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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1919
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7171
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2053
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0809
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 001732

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/4/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [RS](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: REGISTERED PARTIES NOMINATING PRESIDENTIAL
CANDIDATES, INCLUDING PRESIDENT KARIMOV

REF: A. TASHKENT 1677
[1](#)B. TASHKENT 0340

Classified By: POLOFF STEVEN PROHASKA FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan nominated President Karimov as its candidate for the December presidential election at an October 4 plenary session. The four other political parties represented in parliament, all compliant and largely pro-government, have also begun nominating candidates. Karimov has not formally accepted the nomination, and is arguably barred from running for another term. Local news has provided some limited coverage of President Putin's decision to avoid seeking an unconstitutional third term. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The five political parties that the Central Election Commission (CEC) has registered have begun to put forward candidates for the presidential election slated to occur on December 23. The five parties--all support the government--include the Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party, the Milliy Tiklanish (National Rebirth) Party, Fidokorlar (Selfless) National Democratic Party, the Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, and the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU). On September 28, Adolat nominated Dilorom Tashmukhamedova, First Secretary of Adolat and head of the party's faction in the legislature. The People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan has nominated Asliddin Rustamov, head of the party's faction in the Legislative Assembly. Official press reporting citing an official from the Democratic National Rebirth Party has indicated that the party will soon formally nominate Hurshid Dostmukhamedov, Chairman of the party's faction and Deputy Speaker of the parliament's Legislative Assembly. Fidokorlar has nominated Ahtam Tursunov, also head of the party's faction in the legislature. The Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (LDPU) nominated Karimov at a plenary session on October 4, according to Embassy contacts. Despite the LDPU's nomination, President Karimov remains tight-lipped about his candidacy, and the GOU has not issued a public statement on whether he will seek reelection.

[1](#)3. (C) According to an Embassy contact, the GOU had initially invited Latif Gulyamov, leader of the PDPU, to the presidential apparat several months ago and instructed him to

run for President. Gulyamov was greatly upset by the news. (Comment: Apparently, being named a presidential candidate increases the risk that one will lose his or her position--and the privileges associated with it--in the party after the election. End Comment.) The GOU later decided that it would be best to have a variety of presidential candidates, and summoned Tashmukhamedova, Dostmukhamedov, Tursunov, and Rustamov--all leaders of party factions in the Legislative Chamber--to the presidential apparat several weeks ago. Uzbek officials instructed all of them to run for the presidency of Uzbekistan. Like Gulyamov, the other candidates were disappointed by the news.

¶4. (C) Local media has provided some limited coverage of President Putin's decision to run in Russia's parliamentary election. On October 2, the Tashkent newspaper "Tashkent Evening" (Russian-language circulation 2,268, Uzbek-language circulation 2,049) printed a short blurb on Putin leading the party list of "United Russia" in the upcoming parliamentary election, and his decision to avoid making a constitutional change that would allow him a third term. We are not aware, however, of any Uzbek-language TV or radio reporting on Putin's decision, and this is where most Uzbeks would get their news outside of Tashkent.

¶5. (C) Comment: Besides Karimov, the announced candidates from the officially registered (i.e. pro-government) parties could probably be easily controlled by authorities if the GOU has put them forward to create the illusion of a competitive election. We would not be surprised if the nominees ultimately endorse a Karimov bid for the presidency--or any other candidate that Karimov decides to support. The GOU also appears to want multiple presidential candidates in an

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attempt to insulate itself from anticipated Western criticism surrounding the December election. The increased number of candidates suggests that the GOU has been reevaluating its election strategy in recent months, and Gulyamov's apparent replacement by Rustamov may also reflect Gulyamov's attempt to avoid becoming a candidate (and thus hang on to his position) by leveraging his connections in the National Security Service and the Presidential apparat.

¶6. (SBU) Comment cont'd: Karimov was elected President of Uzbekistan in 1991, and in 1995 a referendum extended his term to 2000. He was reelected in 2000, and a 2002 referendum changed the presidential term from five years to seven years. Although the constitution prohibits the same person from being elected to more than two consecutive terms, a constitutional amendment at this point allowing Karimov a third presidential term is not practical. According to Article 128, the parliament may adopt a law concerning amendments to the constitution within six months after submitting a proposal for widespread discussion. It is theoretically possible to submit a constitutional amendment proposal tomorrow, discuss it, and pass it in the parliament, but only ten weeks remain before the December 23 election. The GOU might argue that because the 2002 referendum changed the length of the presidential term, the clock was reset, and Karimov could run again for a term lasting from 2007-2014. Or the regime may simply ignore legal complications of the constitution.

¶7. (C) Comment cont'd: On the other hand, there is an outside chance that Karimov will decide to step aside as President. Karimov stressed to the Ambassador that the constitution would be observed, and that he was primarily interested in leaving a system in place (ref A). It is interesting that the PDPU nominated Asliddin Rustamov, who has openly criticized election law in the past (ref B)--something very unusual for a member of an official party. Moreover, the heavily censored local media has specifically noted Putin's decision to avoid making a constitutional change that would allow him to remain as President of Russia, though Tashkent Evening is a pro-government newspaper with a small

readership. Still, the conventional wisdom is that Karimov will run and the only question is what winning percentage he will amass against his (unwilling) electoral opponents.

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